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# ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOLS,

AND

THE CITIZENS OF QUINCY,

JULY 4, 1856.

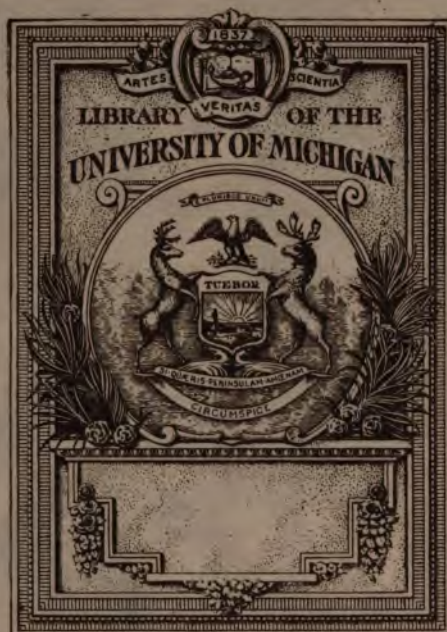
BY

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS.

BOSTON:

LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY.

1856.



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# A D D R E S S

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOLS,

AND

THE CITIZENS OF QUINCY,

JULY 4, 1856.

BY

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS.

BOSTON:  
LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY.  
1856.

QUINCY, July 23, 1856.

At a meeting of the School Committee, *Voted*, that the Chairman present the thanks of the Committee to the Hon. Charles F. Adams, for the very able oration delivered by him on the 4th of July last, and request of him a copy for publication.

W. W. BAXTER, *Sec'y*.

CAMBRIDGE:

ALLEN AND FARNHAM, PRINTERS.

## A D D R E S S .

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MY YOUNG FRIENDS :

LATE as was the notice of this celebration, I felt as if I could not decline to take the part in it assigned to me, if I might hope by accepting, to be of any service to you, in whose progress through the period of your education I have taken a constant interest. This is a day set apart for instruction in a department not embraced in the ordinary course of the schools. It is the day for forming, for nerving, for purifying the patriotic heart both of young and old. Fortunate indeed is it for us in America that we have an anniversary, to which, whether in seasons of prosperity, or of adversity, of security, or of alarm, we can have recourse, for the purpose of invigorating our spirits with the remembrance of trials happily passed by others, and of clearing our perception of the modes by which we may go with safety through those that are in store for us. Here we live over again the contests of a heroic age, and learn from the various examples that it furnishes, bad as well as good, how best to bear ourselves in our own. For although the difficulties that embarrass the successive generations of the race are seldom precisely the

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same, they are all equally susceptible of resolution if subjected to the test of principles upon which time has set the seal of truth. You, my young friends, are yet on the very threshold of life. Many of you reasonably expect to reach over the limit of the present century, and thus to have under your eyes, nay, perhaps, directly to contribute much to the elucidation of this problem of self-government now in progress of solution in America. It may then not be without its use to you, on occasions like this, to lend an attentive ear to the precepts of your fathers, and before you shall be called to take a part in the action of your times, to fix in your minds a vivid impression of the words which they taught, of the spirit by which they were moved, and of the deeds whether of glory or of suffering, of daring or of patience by which they proved themselves fitting examples for your imitation, and that of your successors so long as this globe of earth shall endure.

And first, I pray you to remember that the great revolution which emancipated America was not the result of any wish of your fathers at the outset. They were contented and happy enough so long as they were let alone. It was the aggressive spirit of their rulers which roused first their indignation, and then their resistance. It was the wanton disregard of their dearest rights merely to subserve narrow and selfish interests in the government at home, which stirred up the emotions that gave energy to their ultimate action. Never was there in the history of the world a more joyous era of peace and good feelings than at the close of the reign of the second of the Brunswick line. George the Third became King under

circumstances such as had never before united to bless any occupant of his throne. He was young, having just attained the lawful age, and he had with him the prepossessions natural to all people, but to none more than the British race, for the youthful heir.\* He was the first native son of the soil whom it had been possible even for the oldest of his subjects to hail as their sovereign during their day. He followed a series of strangers, who neither by education, habits, nor character, possessed a single quality around which their loyalty might centre with enthusiasm. He came at a moment when the factions formed out of the attachment to an expelled dynasty had ceased from troubling the public peace by attempts at restoration, and when a most brilliantly conducted war, under the direction of one of the greatest of English statesmen, was on the point of conclusion by a treaty at once proclaiming the humiliation of France, and the expansion of the British power over a prodigious geographical surface in both hemispheres. No time had been afforded to scan the particular qualities of the youthful monarch, or to strip him of that illusive coloring with which it is the delight of mankind to surround the darling portraits of their imagination. Never before had the red cross of St. George floated so proudly over such a breadth of sea and land. Never before had so spontaneous and universal an acclamation swelled from across the oceans of the West, and from beyond the mountains of the East, to join in hailing the accession of a stripling to the sway over the fortunes of a devoted

\* Upon this tendency, some remarkable comments are made by Lord Brougham in his historical sketch of George the Fourth.



people. It seemed in his case, as if the most vivid fancy of an oriental imagination had been exceeded by the reality, and as if naught were necessary beyond the exercise of the simplest prudence, to make the reign thus about to commence, approximate the picture which the poet paints of the first paradise,

“ God had here  
Varied his bounty so with new delights  
As may compare with Heaven.”

But if in one respect more than another George had reason to congratulate himself on his good fortune, it was in the observation of the magnificent empire opening under his hand in America. Here had grown from small beginnings thirteen distinct communities into flourishing States, all zealously vaunting their allegiance and claiming his protection. They had lived through their infancy of struggle with the savages, and their successors, the neighboring settlements of hostile France, and now, thanks to the self-devotion of the immortal Wolfe, even that ample territory, which their enemy cherished in order to hold them in check, had fallen as a prize to the British arms. From the frozen regions of the arctic circle to the neighborhood of the tropics, stretching over forty degrees of latitude, the eastern side of the great American continent acknowledged no other master. A greater legacy never fell into the hands of a single man. It needed only the fostering care of a paternal hand to turn the desert into a garden, and to make the solitudes of the forest ring with the sounds of joyful industry. From the recesses of every valley and from the heights of every mountain would then spring up millions of happy subjects, grate-

ful for the blessings that had fallen to their share, and willing to award a full measure of their thanks to him under whose guardianship their prosperity had been established.

Such was the overruling good fortune which attended the succession of the young George, when in the latter part of 1760, he grasped the sceptre. But, as if it were the intent of Divine Providence to supply in him a fresh proof of the facility with which the perverseness of a ruler can in a few years dissipate the fairest gifts of Heaven, scarcely had the acclamations died away which had hailed him as a blessing, than murmurs arose denoting the rise of a very different class of emotions. Even in the streets of the capital, and almost in the hearing of the monarch, were heard notes of alarm at unworthy favoritism as well as at unlooked for invasions of the time-honored guaranties of the subject's security. And if this shock to popular confidence was wantonly perpetrated so soon in the metropolis itself, it is not to be wondered at if still more lamentable errors made themselves perceptible in the remoter dependencies of the kingdom. Accordingly, it was but a moment before the gratulations which had been so freely poured out in America at the feet of royalty, received a check, and then changed into tones of the most passionate indignation.

And what was it that so suddenly cast a gloom over this picture of beauty and of peace? What was it that raised in a breath the popular waves mountain high where just before there had appeared a summer's sun reflected upon an ocean of glass? The cause of this change it is not difficult now to discern. It was the temper of the sovereign, developing the narrow preju-

dices of his chosen agents. A statesman, short-sighted, formal, and exclusive in spirit, had infused into the new policy of the reign, the essence of a despotic system, and, as with the wand of a magician, had by a wave of his hand changed the hopes of men into fears, their joy into sadness, their love into rage. Especially had he reserved as the best field for the exercise of his skill the wide spread possessions of Great Britain on this western continent.

O! say not that in any land where mankind is gathered into communities, no matter how minute may be the subdivision of power, it is not possible for a single misguided or reckless man, when vested with authority, to do things in a moment which produce consequences no later prudence can avert and no repentance atone for. George Grenville struck the blow which shook America to its foundations. The scales fell from the eyes of the people. The King, upon whom they had but a few days before looked as on a guardian angel, seemed now little better than a tyrant, and the government which promised so many blessings appeared as producing nothing but a malediction. The land teemed only with discord; and honest people looked gloomily on each other when they met, as if every new day were to bring evil and not good, in its train. Grenville had unchained the furies of antiquity. Alecto roused herself at the sight of the harvest of strife, —

“Et grave Tisiphone risit gavisâ futuris.”

Yet the motives which had tempted Grenville to his fatal policy, were by no means such as to justify any public man in resorting to a measure of merely doubtful expediency. He had thoughtlessly embraced a

project which had not even novelty for its recommendation; for the experienced eye of Sir Robert Walpole, had long before detected the danger, the fear of which led him very wisely to decline it. Grenville had done irreparable mischief by destroying the confidence of Americans in the good faith of the government. And this not from any general principle or comprehensive purpose, but solely to gratify the selfish desires of a small body of men wielding a disproportionate share of political power in the House of Commons, and through that body over the form of government itself. From the day of the revolution that called William of Orange to the throne, Great Britain had been under the rule of an oligarchy, denominated the Whig party, but really consisting of a few persons in the House of Peers, connected with an order of gentlemen, proprietors of great landed estates, who could command by means of their wealth a large proportion of the seats in the House of Commons. The source of their strength lay in the closeness of their association, cemented as it was by a common bond, the preservation of their property, and by the pursuit of a common object, the control of the official patronage of the government. It was to the good-will of this narrow connection that most of the aspirants to power had been in the habit of addressing themselves, rather than to the favor of the great body of the nation. And George Grenville formed no exception to the rule. He had risen to the post of prime minister, and he naturally labored to confirm himself in the place. In this view, it occurred to him that the taxation of this far-off but flourishing country of America would be very agreeable to those he was seeking to conciliate,



by relieving them of a certain proportion of the burdens pressing on their own property. Of the abstract justice of such a plan, or of the extent to which it might raise opposition as a violation of political rights, he took no note whatever. America stood in his eyes solely as a dependency existing for the benefit of the little island of Great Britain, from which it would be perfectly fair to draw money, whenever it might seem unadvisable to attempt to force too much out of the pockets of the country gentlemen.

In regard to the immediate object he had in hand, Grenville was not mistaken in his calculations. The small circle of his masters in Parliament manifested great satisfaction with his new invention for coining money without trouble. It looked to them much as the lamp did to Aladdin in Eastern story, a thing which they had only to rub, and forthwith would come the means of gratifying even the most extravagant wishes. As to the king, he had probably never thought of the plan before it was proposed to him, but after it was suggested, and especially after it seemed to be so agreeable to his faithful commons, there was nothing in his own character or temper which stood in the way of cordial concurrence. So the whole scheme went through the necessary forms with but a shadow of opposition. Some of the colonial agents ventured to whisper that there might be difficulty in America, but their representations were heeded no more than the ripple of the distant ocean. For what could the Americans do, but submit to the pleasure of their masters with a good grace?

Yet in this wanton act of an accidental leader of a haughty and exclusive party is to be seen the seed of

the mighty Revolution, the fruits of which are, even after the lapse of ninety years, yet produced only in small measure, comparatively with those promised in futurity. Grenville had shaken the reliance of a whole continent in the good faith of Britain. He had spread a general distrust of her disposition to abide by compacts hallowed by time, under which rights had become confirmed portions of the mental constitution of populous communities. The error once committed was in its very nature irreparable. It was of no avail that the originator very soon disappeared from the scene, and that others followed him earnestly disposed to apply some effective remedy. Parliament had solemnly declared, "that it was just and necessary that a revenue should be raised in America," without intimating an idea of the possibility of needing the concurrence of the people. So long as this record remained on the statute-book, it was utterly immaterial what might be the extent of the surrenders of the practice. The danger continued of a revival at the caprice of every new minister. Nothing could quiet the uneasiness short of an abandonment of the right; and of that there was no symptom. Much as the Americans were disposed to rejoice at the repeal of the stamp act, they felt that they could do so only with trembling. The same inducement to court the favor of the ruling power of the House of Commons, which had first led Grenville to attempt the fatal experiment, might impel any one of his successors to repeat it. And in this foreboding they were not mistaken. For not two years elapsed before Charles Townshend, perhaps in a moment of artificial exhilaration, taking fire at the expression of a doubt by his political opponents, of his courage to

propose it, precipitately pledged himself to renew the claim, a pledge which he soon afterwards redeemed, by suggesting the memorable tax on tea.

There are lessons in this story, which it behooves the men of every age, who take a part in political affairs, to lay to heart. George Grenville, it is true, was no great thing of a statesman. Even the friendly rhetoric of Edmund Burke raises him little above the category of public men who sacrifice the essentials of government to a pertinacious devotion to forms, — those now known, in the cant phrase of the day, in Britain, as the men of red tape. But as sometimes happens with such men, Grenville, by the very rigidity with which he followed up a precedent, losing sight of the different circumstances in which he was applying it, actually struck a bolder stroke than if he had been the most daring of innovators. His vision, confined within the circle of Cocker's arithmetic, discerned no question of rights or wrongs in a measure to raise money. If the people of England were liable to pay the expenses of government, why were the people of the colonies not to pay likewise? It probably never occurred to him to reflect, that in the one case there were safeguards against abuses of the power which did not exist in the other; and that, therefore, what was justice in Great Britain might nevertheless work a tyranny in America. His error was the result not so much perhaps of wilful intention as of inconsideration, favored by a spirit habitually negligent of popular rights. Yet it is not the less certain that in the positions of highest responsibility where incalculable results are likely to flow from even the chance acts of a political chief, no excuse of ignorance,

or inadvertence, and no palliation of good intention can be received for the commission of enormous mistakes. Especially is this the case where the primary motive does not seem adequate to authorize a disastrous measure. There can be no doubt that it was in order the more firmly to fix himself in his seat, that he chose to tempt a controlling body of persons in the state by the hope of relieving themselves from a part of the public burdens, to give their sanction to a breach of the public faith, and to an invasion of the rights of large numbers of their fellow men. He tempted them, and they fell. In the language of the great poet applied to a crime of deeper dye, though equally the offspring of the want of consideration,

“Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat  
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe  
That all was lost.”

Yes, such was the penalty of an act intended only to serve a very inferior purpose, but the operation of which was to destroy the great element which holds society itself together. Yes, GOOD FAITH was lost. And with it America was lost to Great Britain. And then and there was the child Independence born.

A secondary cause which contributed to this result is to be found in the degree to which British statesmen undervalued the character of the people with whom they were dealing. The idea that these would have the audacity to resist any measure which it might please the mother country to adopt, no matter how distasteful, never for a moment entered their minds. They might have anticipated a little temporary murmuring; possibly some remonstrances and warm reso-



lutions — nay, even some petitions, such as actually came in course of time, and were very summarily thrown under the Parliamentary table; but that this would all blow over, and that the people, finding there was no help, that the thing was done and could not be undone, would ultimately submit to the stern necessity, and bear themselves cheerfully afterwards, did not to them admit of a doubt. Even the general resistance to the introduction of the stamps which defeated that measure, did not completely rouse them from this delusion; neither was it until the destruction of the tea that they began to believe that those over whom they were assuming such an extent of authority, were not yet slaves, and did not mean to become so, if they could prevent it.

It ought however to be observed in this connection that the British ministers were not altogether to blame for the impressions they had formed of the character of our people. They could receive them only from those persons with whom they were brought most directly in contact. These were the applicants for office, the petitioners for favors, the suppliants for grace. Now if any man is going to make up a judgment of the character of a nation from that of the courtiers who stand around a throne, or of the place-hunters who infest the ante-rooms of ministers, or of the demagogues who fawn upon the people for their sweet voices, he will be very likely to think of it pretty much as the British ministry thought of the colonists — that they were servile in spirit, and not trustworthy anywhere. Such men are all of the same genus — and only vary in the species with the circumstances under which they unfold their nature.

Neither was it only from their experience of the class with which they had directly to deal, that they formed such an opinion. They could not fail to be more or less affected by the representations obtained through these sources, of the motives and acts of the Colonists generally. The effect was thoroughly to poison the sources of their information. The office holders wrote what they thought would be agreeable and ingratiate themselves, rather than what was true. They ridiculed the opposition to the obnoxious measures, and instigated to the perseverance in them at all hazards. Whenever a popular outbreak happened, ministers were told that it was the work of a few factious disorganizers, that it was only momentary, and would soon die away. When things looked more serious, they were urged to persist, and to send out a few regiments and some ships of war, who would frighten nobody but a few old women, and yet would secure obedience. They were stimulated at last to adopt the motto, "we will subdue you," which ended in the catastrophe at Lexington and Bunker's hill. May God ever protect a hapless people from the influence of such desperate advisers! In this cause no man proved more energetic and more officious than Thomas Hutchinson, a native of Massachusetts, once the idol of her population, but who had bartered their affections and his own principles for the possession of the highest places in the province. He served like a perpetual blister on the body politic, at once to inflame and to torment it. Such men play a part more or less prominent in every age. From traitors to Liberty, whether made so by the mere love of pelf, or the more lofty but not less selfish aspirations for power, Good Lord, in all seasons, deliver us.

Neither were they confined to any particular grade of public service. There were instruments of all kinds. And one of these immortalized his infamy by resorting to that outrageous assault upon the earliest and boldest of our patriots, James Otis, Jr., which effectually impaired his reason for the remainder of his life ;

“ And Amnon’s murder, by a specious name  
Was called *a just revenge for injured fame,*”

but which only had the effect of stimulating his countrymen to a determination ten thousand times stronger than ever, to overthrow the haughty domination which had prompted the crime.

If this brief view of the early causes of the declaration of Independence be in any way just, they must be found, first, in the wilful sacrifice made of American Liberty by a British statesman for the sake of ingratiating himself with a privileged class at home ; secondly, in the treachery of venal natives of the colonies, instigating a perseverance in a system of oppression by holding out false hopes of ultimate victory.

But it must not be imagined for a moment, because this experiment failed, that it had not very strong grounds for the expectation of success. The freemen of America had acted, it is true, with vigor in defeating the obnoxious acts of the stamp and the tea tax. But this had been rather the consequence of sudden impulse than of any organized resistance. Although greatly preponderant in numbers, there were nevertheless respectable minorities of greater or less power in most of the colonies, which were not only averse to any recourse to violent opposition, but really in their hearts wished success to the aggressors. Besides this, there

was another great drawback on their efforts. The people were separated into thirteen communities, distinct from each other in government, in habits, in manners, and in their forms of religious faith. Some of them entertained deeply rooted antipathies against the others, the effect of causes traceable into their very origin. Up to this time the communications between them had been rare. The early puritan of Massachusetts had been in the habit of regarding the quakers of Pennsylvania as of the troublesome class of brawlers whom his fathers had indignantly expelled from their borders, and the Catholics of Maryland as little better than the children of the scarlet woman seated on her throne in the seven-hilled city; whilst they in their turn had learned to view him as a dangerous leveller in politics and a fanatic in religion. Time had indeed softened away the roughest lines of these prejudices; but they still remained, at least to such an extent as to imply an alienation of spirit which might prove an effective obstacle to the establishment of every effective form of united resistance, in the contingency of a struggle with arbitrary power.

It was upon a full comprehension of the nature of these advantages on his side that Lord North, when he succeeded to the direction of affairs, made his calculations of reëstablishing the authority now seriously shaken. Of Massachusetts, in which the sentiment of opposition seemed the most general and determined, he had little hope, excepting through the direct use of force. Accordingly he determined to send out such an army as might overawe the people, whilst his agents were to inflict the chastisement which he had in store for her insubordination. She was to be made an ex-

ample of, as a warning to the other colonies. Towards New York and Pennsylvania a different policy was adopted, having the aspect of conciliation, but really intended the more certainly to enslave them. '*Divide and conquer*,' was his motto. Neither was he without good cause for believing that there existed in both those colonies powerful interests which might be depended upon at a proper time and in the right way to throw their influence on his side. And he well knew that if those colonies could be once persuaded to refuse their coöperation, were it only to remain neutral, the obstacles interposed to further united action of the remaining colonies would be insuperable.

And it must be confessed that there was a moment when the cause was in extreme peril. Massachusetts, however determined to resist, was in no condition to carry on a war single-handed with her great antagonist. Her safety lay either in submission or in the success of an appeal to her sister colonies to join in resistance whilst there was time. Happily they proved not insensible to the earnestness of her call. Seeing that in her fate was involved the security of the continent, they agreed in the plan of sending to the city of Philadelphia, delegates selected from among their most trustworthy men, whose duty it should be to meet together, and to consult upon the best measures to be taken to avert the evils by which all were threatened. Thus was formed the first congress, which met in September, 1774, composed of delegates from eleven colonies, the nucleus of that great measure of union which ultimately worked the salvation of republican liberty in this Western Hemisphere.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS, — I do not propose to fatigue you by following out this narrative more minutely. My design has been to show you, first, that your fathers were no seekers of discord, but that they were driven to resistance only by a wanton destruction of the safeguards to their freedom by the government at home; secondly, that this was precipitated mainly by the recklessness of one public man, who from selfish motives, lighted the torch of civil war which neither he nor any one after him proved able to quench; thirdly, that their salvation was effected only by their conviction of the paramount necessity of union among all those who held the same opinions, for the common defence and the common protection. Bear these conclusions in mind, my friends, wherever you go, and in whatever trials you may be placed. For they may be of as much use to you in extricating you out of any future difficulties in your way, as they were eighty years ago to those who went before you.

I will now proceed to touch upon only two more events in the Revolution from which a useful moral may now be drawn. The first of these occurred soon after the fact became certain that war was upon us. The blood shed at Lexington and Concord warned the Americans that General Gage was ready to let loose the mercenaries of Britain upon the population of Massachusetts, and no safety was left for them but in a call to arms. On a sudden there appeared on the heights around the town of Boston myriads of men with musket and sabre, powder-horn and shot-bag, ready to fight as well as they knew how in defence of their hearthstones, but not well prepared for a continuous struggle with trained bands, inured to discipline and directed by



an experienced chief. Rushing in as they did from all quarters, many of them from the neighboring colonies, they recognized no common leader; and coming for the most part voluntarily, they acknowledged no obligation to remain longer than they pleased. This was no army. It might do for a little while, and until some better system of defence could be devised, but it was plain that it could not last. The fact was clear that one organization was indispensable, with a single commander-in-chief. It was equally clear that Massachusetts could not supply any thing to reach beyond the circle of its own citizens. In order to consolidate the means of continental resistance, the power must come from a more central source. There was no authority lodged anywhere unless it was to be found in the Congress at Philadelphia. The second Congress of 1775 assumed it by adopting the army, and by determining to supply it with officers of its own. This was the first momentous event of the war.

But even this did not compare in political value with the next step, which was the selection of the person who was to serve as the commander-in-chief. The war was in Massachusetts, most of the soldiers assembled were Massachusetts men, the organization, what there was of it, belonged to Massachusetts, and it was commanded by men who had seen some service in the contests formerly waged with the French. It would therefore have been deemed scarcely unreasonable, if Massachusetts had asked it as a favor of her sister colonies to permit one of her most accomplished sons to take the guardianship of his native soil. Neither could the colonies have objected with any grace, unless they had had it in their power to offer some individual of indisputably

greater skill, equal integrity, and established reputation, whose accession to the command would at once give an earnest of victory. In point of fact, there was no such person. Yet Massachusetts did nothing of what might have been expected of her. Massachusetts remembered that the active struggles of the world are conducted with effect mainly by the young. She overlooked the gray hairs, the long experience, the honorable services of some of her own officers, and with a trust creditable to her magnanimity, whatever might have been the issue, went into the colony of Virginia to pick out a young man, only forty-three years of age, not greatly versed in the theory or the practice of war, not distinguished for extensive acquirements of any kind, and recommended mainly by the rough toils and hardy service to which he had voluntarily exposed himself in the forests of the West, as well as by a display of the judgment, the firmness, and the decision which fit a man anywhere and always for command. That man was George Washington. When Massachusetts assumed the responsibility of expressing this preference, her members knew very little of the individual excepting by report. The risk was prodigious,—yet prodigiously was it redeemed by the result. Truly was it said at the time by one of the delegates, that “the liberties of America depended upon him in a great degree.” Yet he proved all and more than all that the most sanguine imagination could have anticipated.

Yet it is good to stop here a moment and consider the character of Washington calmly. Eulogists have striven with each other in the labor of painting him as a perfect man, a species of phoenix often described but never seen by human eyes. I know not how it may be



with others, but these labors have the effect of chilling instead of warming my admiration. If Washington was perfect, then is there nothing in common between him and any of us who feel a strong sense of our own imperfections. He is inimitable, therefore no object for imitation. His example is of no use whatever to the world. Again, if Washington possessed in himself a combination of qualities which led him so surely to do right, then was his merit in overcoming temptations to do otherwise much less than that of those of us who have greater internal difficulties to contend with. The fighting deities of ancient mythology who are described as immortal cannot be praised for courage, as men who risk their lives in a battle. Achilles, invulnerable excepting in one spot, was in every attribute of heroism incomparably beneath Hector who went to the field shielded by no unusual protection. I do not much relish this tendency to transform Washington into a mythical idol. I believe he was in fact very much like the rest of us; that he had his emotions, his temptations, his prejudices, and his passions, just like all other men; and that his true fame rests upon his passage through a trying career under the guidance of one paramount idea of right, performing his high duties nobly, conscientiously, disinterestedly to the close. If so, he is then a fair object of imitation for all youthful Americans. The same rule of action is not beyond the reach of any of you, — and, if faithfully followed out, though it may not hit exactly the same path of worldly success, will abundantly bless in its fruits the life of every one who shall determine to adhere to it. Ample opportunities fall within the range of the men of every generation, to develop just the same qualities, if they choose

it. Perhaps this very day and this very hour may suggest to us that a second Washington would not be unwelcome to restore to us something of the purity and the dignity of the heroic period of the republic. It was but a few days earlier than this, eighty-one years ago, that Congress conferred upon Washington the first great trust of his life, and that he issued from Philadelphia on his way to the fields then fresh with the blood of the slain of Bunker Hill. Is it preposterous to suppose that the lapse of time has done nothing to cut off other opportunities, albeit not exactly of the same kind, for developing the same great traits of courage and of fortitude, of ardor and of self-control which then began to fasten upon him the eyes of an admiring world?

I have spoken of the first great event of the Revolutionary struggle, the choice of a chief adequate to the emergency. Let me now come to the second, the enunciation of the great principles for which he fought. And this brings me to the consideration of the act of which this day is the anniversary. But prior to this, let me remind you, my young friends, of the fact which I have already stated that in the beginning there was no sign of a wish in America to be independent. The struggle had been wantonly brought on by men in office, for purposes of their own, through a series of aggressions on the rights of freemen, which left the latter no choice except slavery or resistance by force. It was not then a commonplace contest for power, which either party, if victorious, might abuse at will. It was rather a pure question of Liberty. The position of the Americans had been strictly defensive. Their spirit had been pacific, until roused by the despotic

temper of their rulers from beyond the water. It was this which at last impelled them against their will to cement the connection of the colonies under the rallying cry of a union of all honest men. It was this which elicited in its season a justification of their conduct, which expanding itself far beyond the area of their immediate necessities, identified their cause with that of human liberty for ever throughout the world.

The paper called the Declaration of Independence, which agreeably to a time-honored custom you have heard this day read to you, was not needed for the maintenance of the colonial cause. Neither was such an exposition at all contemplated in the action proposed by the respective colonies. That was confined to a mere affirmation of the fact that "these United Colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent States." Such were the terms of the resolution offered in Congress on the 10th of June by Richard Henry Lee, in obedience to the instructions of Virginia. It was upon this and this alone that the great debate on independence actually took place. But you must not fail to observe that its scope was any thing but wide. It contemplated but one step, a transition from thirteen dependent, to as many independent governments. It assumed to be the action of separate communities, harmonizing only for the single object expressed. It was predicated singly upon a presumed violation of chartered rights, and was silent about natural or individual rights. Hence there were no guaranties of the latter in the social condition of the states after they should have established their independence, and no restraints upon power if it should incline to become oppressive. Independence of a distant sovereignty was

all that was to be gained by it. But Massachusetts or Virginia could have gained that, and yet would not have been estopped from instituting within her borders any form of government she might please, even were it in spirit ten times more subversive of personal rights than the one against which she had striven in arms. The resolution affirmed the independence of the state very broadly, it is true, but it did not comprehend either individual freedom or collective union, without which the other boon would prove of comparatively small value. And even independence itself, it claimed not so much in virtue of any general principle having an application beyond the sphere of the immediate emergency, as on the score of the special causes for dissatisfaction to which the abuse of power by the mother country in this case might have happened to give rise.

Here it was that a new measure was adopted, that at once

“As with an anchor fixed the driving state.”

Congress determined to accompany their action, with a paper designed to be a full explanation to the world of the reasons on which they proposed to defend it. Happily the task of preparing this document fell upon Thomas Jefferson, a man quite competent to take in the grandeur of the idea, and singularly gifted with the power to compress his meaning within the most felicitous forms. Far from seeking to limit the application of his doctrine, he studiously labored to generalize it as extensively as possible. As a consequence, single cases of wrong started up at once into affirmations of universal right. And the tyranny of one master was made to establish on everlasting foundations the inalienable



rights of every subject. Never was there a more magnificent expansion of a noble cause. Hence it is that from the outset the author seems to have forgotten the factitious subdivision into thirteen communities, and to have spoken out at once grandly and broadly in the name and on behalf of associated man.

"When," he says, "it becomes necessary for *one people* to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation."

And after enumerating those causes with care, he once more emphatically declares, not in the name of the Colonies, but of the collective body, that

"A prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a *free people*."

"We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America in general Congress assembled, do, in the name, and by authority of *the good people* of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these United Colonies, are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States."

It was then the voice of *one people*, speaking through thirteen forms of organization united for common objects and acting separately for their local convenience, which was uttered to the world on the 4th of July, 1776. The great idea of *union*, was thus incorporated into the very essence of the compact, inspiring all the parties to it with confidence in a mutual support under future trials. It was a union endeared to them, too, by a sense of common injuries received from arbitrary power and by the conviction of its value in repelling

common dangers. Above all it was a union in the nature of a joint pledge before the world that the wrongs of which its members complained at the hands of the king of Great Britain, and which justified their refusal further to acknowledge his supremacy, should ever be stamped by them with the same reprobation, by whomsoever they might be afterwards repeated. Not for themselves alone did they speak but for their most remote posterity. Nor yet did they denounce the British sovereign alone, but likewise every future tyrant great or small who should be so wicked as to copy his example.

But beyond and above this brilliant light is found another and a more dazzling one, the central point of the new system, and its warming and vivifying essence. I need not explain that it is the guaranty spontaneously offered of a new era of freedom to the race. It was not enough to say that the king had transcended his legitimate authority, and had encroached upon the rights secured to his subjects by the constitution of his country. The paper went on to assert in behalf of innocent man in every clime certain natural rights of which no human power can justly deprive him. The words are doubtless familiar to you, but they will never do harm by repetition.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the

right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

Behold in this declaration not simply the rejection of the despotic power of the British king, but the inhibition of the exercise of the like by any authority that might succeed to his. Behold a pledge that Americans will for ever renounce the pretensions to any such sway over each other as they had been driven by persecution to throw off from themselves. In future no action likely to make the race retrograde into slavery shall ever receive sympathy at their hands, but a strong sense of their own sufferings will make them accept with delight every wise and just measure that shall have for its object the further emancipation of their kind.

If this be, then, a correct view of the definition of rights, the leading object of the Declaration of Independence must be presumed to have been to inaugurate an era of enlarged political freedom. Looking beyond the immediate present, the keen eye of the author contemplated the steadily increasing force of a mighty principle which might ultimately ingraft itself upon the convictions of the world. A principle which would diminish the causes and soften the hardships of war, and instead of protracting the ferocity transmitted from a barbarous age would lighten the pains of every dungeon, and work out the liberation of every innocent captive. Much of this good it has already done. A comparison of the prevailing customs and modes of thought at this period with those described as existing



a century ago would show a much more rapid progress all over the world than most persons are apt to imagine. Yet it must be confessed that a great deal remains yet to do, and most of all in America where obstacles to progress were the least expected.

That the Declaration of Independence was a step greatly in advance of the age in which it was made cannot be denied. Its framers were not unconscious of the fact that much existed immediately around them not in harmony with the principles they had set forth. But that was no reason with them for hesitating to enunciate the all-important truths. They were sensible of the presence of habits and customs transmitted from the old world, and copied from adverse forms of government, unpropitious to an immediate reception of the new teaching. They were too wise not to understand that in all the great movements of society, hasty and overrough handling of existing institutions may occasion greater evils than it is designed to remedy. They therefore contented themselves with the enunciation of solemn truth, which with its still small voice should ever be out in quest of ears willing to catch it in the intervals of calm from the busy hum of the world's industry, and thus gradually wind its way into the deepest recesses of human conviction. Resting satisfied with fixing upon an imperishable foundation in America, the axiom that *Liberty* was the general rule, they left all that might at the moment be exceptional in the national practices to the purifying besom of time, which in the end is sure to sweep away as rubbish all obsolete errors of opinion and of principle.

And indeed this calculation has not been altogether mistaken. In the course of eighty years the legislation



of America has been purified of much that was not in harmony with the new dispensation. The laws of primogeniture, those of entail, proprietary rights in some States and feudal customs in others, the claims of an established church and the continuation of exclusive powers in the hands of classes, have given way before the force of the doctrine of equal rights. Even the habit of holding innocent men in bondage, which was universal at the opening of the Revolution, has gradually receded from one half of the Union, and the statute-books, which teemed with provisions for the perpetuation of a system of caste, have been purged of many of their stains. So long as he lived, no person was more active and influential in accelerating these reforms, especially in his own State where they were the most needed, than the author of the Declaration of Independence himself.

Thus it will appear how much has actually been gained in the progress of time by the great recognition of principles made on the 4th of July, 1776. But it is not to be pretended that far more does not yet remain to be done before their operation shall have become really complete. The opinions of men undergo transitions, sometimes very rapidly, under the pressure of favoring circumstances, and at others scarcely perceptible in their motion. Doubtless much may yet be seen in the institutions of the old States at least, which seems to harmonize more with the notions of the old world than with those of the new. But so long as the natural vigor of the great charter of our Independence shall be preserved, and its sway extended over the minds of the rising generations, there is reason for hope that every casual exception will disappear, and

that in the end the United States may become that example of a great free nation to the rest of mankind which its founders most ardently hoped that it might be.

But in order to reach this blessed result, it behooves you, my young friends, who are coming upon the stage, to hold fast the vital essence that alone can bring it surely about. *Union and freedom.* Union of all honest men for the sake of freedom. Union, as the instrument of effecting the most general good. Freedom, as the agent without which there can be no good at all. I say this with the more earnestness that I think I have seen among us of late years some relaxation of attachment to both these principles. It has even been boldly declared of late that our national institutions do not naturally and necessarily carry with them the cardinal doctrine of the Declaration of Independence, wherever they may go. Such an idea seems to me to be false to our first duty as a people, false to the memory of our fathers, false to the pledges given on every battle field of the Revolution. It indicates the presence and operation of a corrupting cause which if not counteracted will completely enervate the manhood of America. It betrays that stage of society which I should be sorry that the poet's words could apply to us so soon,

“ But what more oft, in nations grown corrupt,  
And by their vices brought to servitude,  
Than to love bondage more than liberty,  
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty.”

Let no such slander be whispered against the youth of our day. If the men of 1776 pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honors to resist meas-

ures having for their object the establishment of a tyranny over this people, how much more is it the duty of all of you to watch unceasingly that no similar attempt, no matter what may be the form it shall assume, be repeated with your sanction, either express or implied. How much more should it be your care that the maxims which they set up as the guardian angels of a happy land should be left free to expand their wings over the ever-enlarging area of our social state.

My young friends,—We have seen to-day the case of a King's reign commenced in great glory, but by reason of the errors of his minister and his own arbitrary temper soon verging into a tyranny, which brought on a conflict, and a final disruption of the empire. We have seen on the other hand, a country rising from the struggle, instinct with vigorous youth, which under the guidance of a firm and patriotic chief, and inspired by lofty principles, established a system of Liberty and Union. It is then for you to remember from this lesson how much the happiness and the security of society depend upon the spirit in which human authority is directed. You are yet young, and know little of the hazards that attend this last and greatest attempt to reap the fruits of an enlightened and Christian civilization. In a country like this, it is not to be expected that the political atmosphere should always be clear, or the sky free from

“ the passing clouds  
That often hang on Freedom's brow.”

But there will be little real danger of failure so long as you do not forget that you are *one people* from the

